

Thursday, January 29, 2004
Puget Sound begs basic protections

SEATTLE POST-INTELLIGENCER EDITORIAL BOARD

Puget Sound deserves as much protection as the waters of other states.

California and Alaska both regulate cruise ships' discharge of sewage in port and along their coasts. Their laws provide worthy models for this state, which likes to think itself second to none in environmental stewardship.

State Rep. Mary Lou Dickerson has appropriately used the laws of the other key states in the West Coast cruise industry to shape a bill that would limit discharge of sewage, oily bilge water and graywater from laundry, dishwashing and showers.

The cruise ship industry and the Port of Seattle argue that a voluntary agreement, being negotiated with the state Department of Ecology, will be adequate. It's hard to reconcile the port's promotion of the cruise lines as being a good fit for the environment.

Puget Sound's growing popularity with cruise lines has brought economic benefits. Part of what Puget Sound has to offer visitors and regional residents is an environmental ethic. As Dickerson recognizes, clear, enforceable standards for environmental protection are needed. That's particularly true around marine sanctuaries, which can play key roles in nourishing sea life.

The cruise industry is a welcome part of the summer scene here. But everybody wins with clear, enforceable environmental standards.